

REMARKS

Claims 1-73 are now pending in the application. A minor clarifying amendment to claim 27 has been submitted. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102 AND § 103

Claims 1, 4-9, 11-24, 26-27, 30-37, 39, 42-51, 53, 56-65, 67-68 and 69-73 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Zerfass (U.S. Pat. No. 6,343,795). Additionally, claim 10 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zerfass (U.S. Pat. No. 6,343,795) in view of Abe et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,070,882). Likewise, claims 25, 38, 52, and 66 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zerfass in view of Stritzke (U.S. Pat. No. 5,267,740). Claims 1-5, 7-9, 11-24, 26-37, 39-43, 45-51, 53-57, 59-65 and 67-73 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takada et al (U.S. patent No. 5,690,343). Claims 1-9, 11-24, 26-37, 39-51, 53-57, 59-65 and 67-73 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takada et al in view of Zerfass. Each of these rejections is respectfully traversed.

At the outset, Applicants note that independent claims 27, 39, 53 and 67, each include the limitation of "a longitudinally flexible inner sealing portion of said carrier disposed laterally adjacent and substantially defining the periphery of the gasket opening". Applicants submit that Zerfass fails to disclose the "flexible sealing portion" being "longitudinally offset relative to the remainder of the carrier" and "laterally adjacent and substantially defining the periphery of the gasket opening," as claimed. In

particular, the portion 18a' of Zerfass referred to by the Examiner as the "flexible sealing portion" is not adjacent and defining an opening. Further, the portions of the layer 12' to the left and to the right of the portions 18a' are not longitudinally offset relative to the remainder of the gasket. Therefore, Applicants submit that the rejection in view of Zerfass is improper and should be withdrawn.

With regard to the rejections in view of Takada, applicants submit that in Fig. 11, the portion 4 referred to by the Examiner as the flexible inner sealing portion is not "laterally adjacent and substantially defining the periphery of the gasket opening," as required by each of the independent claims. Further, applicants submit that the portion 16 referred to by the Examiner as the "flexible outer stopper portion" is receivable within a corresponding recess (at 29) and, therefore, cannot be construed as a "stopper" since it does not perform a stopper function, as claimed. Therefore, Applicants submit that the rejection in view of Takada is improper and should be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 1, 27, 39, 53 and 67 define over the art cited by the Examiner. Likewise, claims 2-26, 28-38, 40-52, 54-66 and 68-73 also define over the art cited by the Examiner, since each are dependent on the above mentioned claims.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office

Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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